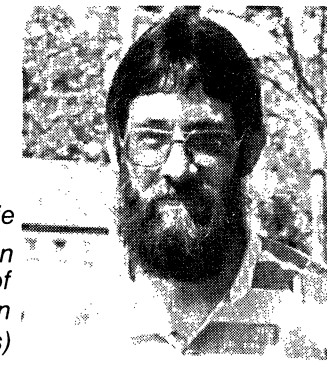
SCHOOLS, ALIENATION AND DELINQUENCY



by Simon Petrie
Lecturer in Education
Brisbane College of
Advanced Education
(Kelvin Grove Campus)

INTRODUCTION

Interest in locating the causes of delinquency has centred, at various times and to varying degrees, upon a multitude of social conditions and forces. Some explanations have focused upon individual pathology, upon 'defective' family backgrounds, upon overcrowding, poverty, or adult criminal influences. Other explanations have focused upon the decline in the influence of agencies of social control, such as the Church, upon the decay of social morality or lack of economic opportunity. Still others have focused upon peer group pressure, upon situational contexts, or the availability of such substances as glue, drugs or alcohol. Certainly, educational systems have come under intense scrutiny, particularly as the link between school failure and the development of delinquency has gained increasing credibility.

Over many years criminologists, sociologists and educationists alike have become preoccupied with the educational status of offenders, summed up by Cooper (1960:207) as follows:

> the educational status of offenders is inferior on the whole to that of the general population, tending to be slightly inferior in respect to amount of schooling, decidedly inferior in respect to school progress and clearly inferior in respect to educational achievement.

On a more general basis, West (1979) has been moved to suggest that within the social sciences there are few more conclusive results than those linking school failure to student deviance of one sort of another. This emphasis upon the educational success or failure of officially classified offenders reveals two basic flaws. Inferior educational status may be a significant factor among officially classifed offenders, although a great deal of work remains to be done, but not all children involved in acts that can be defined as delinquent came to the attention of authorities. Clearly, not all children who are classified as educational failures become delinquents. There still exist, therefore, fundamental questions concerning the definition and classification of children as delinquents. Furthermore, such person-oriented explanations of delinquent behaviour have encouraged an apparently paradoxical situation to develop. Reynolds (1976:217) states:

> One societal institution which has escaped much of the attention that criminologists have lavished upon children and upon their failures is the institution of the school.

The purpose of this paper is not to explore the reasons for the development of this apparent paradox, although the neglect that has occurred hitherto in studies relating schools and delinquency is acknowledged. The purpose of this paper is three-fold. First, to introduce briefly the concept of alienation. Second, to reassess the relationship between schools and delinquency in definitional terms. Finally, to explore the relationship relating schools, alienation and delinquency drawing upon empirical evidence.

The material for this paper is based on data drawn from an intensive, longitudinal study of a single high school. For the purposes of this paper, information concerning the five 'feeder' primary schools has also been included.

The high school, which was opened in 1972. had a population in 1980 of 1300 students and 79 members of staff. The 'feeder' primary schools differ in age, size and design. Enrolments in 1980 totalled approximately 4250 students and 138 members of staff.

The schools all serve a rapidly developing predominantly working class community in an outer suburb of a major Queensland city. Fifty two percent of the population of the community is under eighteen years of age. There is a high proportion (34% in the high school) of first generation migrant students in the schools.

The community is poorly served in terms of facilities and amenities, is officially recognised as educationally disadvantaged and has earned a pejorative reputation in the eyes of outsiders. Many families in the community have problems which involve welfare or other social agencies.

The high school exhibits all the symptoms of a low institutional pride syndrome (Phillipson, 1971), with high levels of alienation, dissociation and rebellion among students. The 'tough' reputation of the school has resulted in the development of a highly custodial orientation among staff in terms of discipline and control. The primary schools vary in their orientations towards teaching and learning.

The collection of material for this paper was facilitated by means of participation, first as a teacher, and subsequently as an independent observer, over a period of five years. The data were collected through the agency of an extensive network of informants, consisting of both staff and students, the examination of documents, schools records and media reports and through contacts with parents and external agencies in the community. Throughout, the researcher relied heavily upon formal discussion and interview.

THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION

Alienation is a topic of growing concern to educationists. In particular, the concept of alienation has been utilised in explanations of student disruption, dissociation or rebellion (Phillipson, 1971; McPartland and McDill, 1976; Reynolds, 1976; Wayson, 1976; Liazos, 1978) which are manifested by rising rates of truancy, vandalism and other forms of delinquency, disruption of classes and increasing levels of resistance among students. Strategies to improve school conditions in various ways, such as the reduction of school size, the inclusion of students in school decision-making processes and moves to increase consensus or goals and enforcement of rules, all reflect efforts to reduce levels of student alienation. Alienation in schooling can only be understood, however, when related to the wider relationship between schooling and the social structure.

Various approaches to the concept of alienation have identified alienation as a subjective, individual psychological state or as an objective structural feature of human situation. The former contends that people's perceptions of their world constitute a critical part of social reality, incorporating such dimensions as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, self-estrangement and social isolation. But to regard alienation only in psychological terms is insufficient, for human beliefs and feelings are subject to manipulation, false consciousness and accommodation.

In this context, the structural, sociologically-oriented perspective becomes more pertinent. This perspective regards

alienation as an aspect of social structure, roles and functions. In Marxist terms, alienation is presented in terms of four broad relations which are so distributed as to cover the whole of human existence (Ollman, 1971). These are man's relation to his productive activity, his product, other men and the species. Thus, work is alienating to the extent that workers are divorced from control of their working conditions or from owning the processes and products of their labour. Human relationships are alienating when people are treated as objects or standardised abstract units, when people are manipulated to serve the objectives of others and when high mobility of specialisation in the society prevent people from developing affectional or moral bonds to a community. In these terms, alienation is an inevitable consequence of the capitalist mode of production, or as Wegner (1975:177) suggests:

> A negative orientation involving feelings of discontent and cynical beliefs towards a specific social context.

The essential features of alienation can be identified as estrangement, detachment, fragmentation and isolation (Newmann, 1981), with an underlying, basic feature of powerlessness, common to many aspects of social interaction in modern, industrialised societies.

In terms of crime causation, therefore Quinney (1980:39) suggests that at the theoretical level:

> An understanding of crime in our society begins with the recognition that the crucial phenomenon to be considered is not crime per se, but the historical development and operation of capitalist society. The study of crime involves an investigation of such natural products and contradictions of capitalism as alienation, inequality, poverty, unemployment, spiritual malaise and the economic crisis of the capitalist state. To understand crime we have to understand the development of the political economy of capitalist society.

Before exploring the relationship between schools, and the process of schooling, alienation and delinquency it is necessary to reassess the relationship between schools and delinquency in definitional terms.

SCHOOL CRIME OR SCHOOL AGE CRIME?

In an examination of school crime in U.S. schools, Demarest (1975:35) states that vandalism could be viewed as 'a national epidemic', adding the rider that 'the contagion seems to be outrunning any hope of cure'. Similarly, Garrett, et al. (1978:4) states the following:

> Within the last ten years we have witnessed an entirely new and largely unexpected phenomenon: serious crime in schools. Once considered neutral (sometimes sacred) turf, schools are now experiencing a rash of murders, rapes, robberies and acts of wanton destruction, directed at everyone within and around the school setting. And the increased incidence has been sufficiently sudden and steep to catch both practitioners and researchers almost totally off-guard.

A growing sense of alarm developed within the U.S. public school system at the increase in and seriousness of crime in schools (U.S. Senate Inquiry, 1975; 1977; Safe Schools Study, 1977). More important perhaps, the escalating cost of crime in general, and of school-crime in particular, in both social and financial terms, attracted increasing public attention, initially in the U.S. but elsewhere as well. Investigators of the relationship between schools and the delinquency became preoccupied with attempts to define the parameters of crime within the school setting.

The Safe Schools Study (1977) includes the following offences within its definition of school crime:

1. Offences against persons such as rape, robbery, assault
2. Offences against property, such as burglary, arson, bombings and disorderly conduct (defined as unlawful assembly, not public demonstration or other peer disturbance)
3. Other offences, such as drug or alcohol abuse.

Gottfredson (1975) developed a classification of those incidents most frequently included in reports of school crime:

1. School attacks, thefts and withdrawals, including vandalism of school property, stealing from students and staff, physical attacks on school members (students and staff) and high levels of suspension from school, reports to the school office, and absenteeism and truancy.
2. Drug and alcohol abuse.
3. Student protests and demonstrations.
4. Racial and ethnic group tensions.

In his study of 'the unruly school', Rubel (1977) distinguishes between disorder, disruption and crime, utilising the generic term, misbehaviour. Misbehaviour is defined as being any act judged unacceptable by the school administration. Acts may range from a student talking out of turn in class to a full-scale student riot. The term misbehaviour is subdivided into three categories. The first category — disorders — are acts which are non-criminal but which generally result in some action by the classroom teacher or by another member of the school staff. The second category — disruptions — refers specifically to group events. Group events are viewed as activities designed to accomplish planned goals or to establish points of contention which will significantly interrupt the education of other students. The final category — crime — refers to any act that is forbidden by public law, and that if committed by an adult could result in the arrest of that adult.

Critics suggest that the definitions are restricted to a small set of serious offences, or include only "a rag-bag of violent crimes, ethnic tensions, student demonstrations, or the 'victimless crime' of drug or alcohol abuse" (McPartland and McDill, 1976; 1977). But what this work does indicate is that the school represents a specific social context within which delinquent acts may occur. There are specific acts that can be clearly defined as school crimes — for example, the wilful destruction of school property by arson or vandalism, by students.

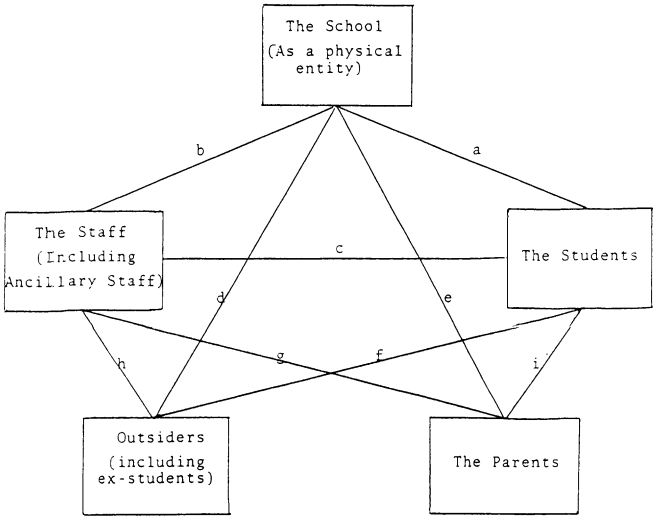
However, a case remains to be made that delinquent behaviour and school crime can be considered as facets of separate phenomena, or indeed, can be considered jointly as facets of a single phenomenon. Delinquency in school does not occur in isolation from delinquency in society (Ruchkin, 1977; Wilson, 1977). Delinquency does not stop at the school gate.

The findings of two pieces of research become critical in this context. The work by Power (1962; 1967; 1971) in London, indicates that the official peak age for indictable offences in the United Kingdom is the year immediately prior to the school-leaving age. What is more revealing is that when the school-leaving age was raised from 14 to 15 years of age, the official peak age for indictable offences also changed from 13 to 14 years of age. Such statistical analyses have to be treated with caution, accepting the vagaries of official statistics. Nevertheless, they appear to indicate that a significant number of school age children are involved in delinquent acts. This latter point is reinforced by the work of Morgenstern (1982), who states that nearly one-half of all the crime committed in the U.S. is committed by school age children. Although representing only 19% of the general U.S. population, in 1977 school age children accounted for 53% of arrests for motor vehicle theft, 51% of arrests for burglary, 42% of arrests for larceny-theft, 33% of arrests for robbery, 17% of arrests for rape, 16% of arrests for aggravated assault and 9% of arrests for murder. Morgenstern indicates that the average age of school age children involved in crime during 1977 was 15 years of age.

Part of the difficulty then, lies in attempts to determine whether delinquent or criminal acts are aimed at the school per se, or occur because the school offers a situational context for criminal acts, or that the relationship between the two is merely one of the coincidence of age. Figure 1 illustrates the complexity of the situation.

The school represents the focal point of social interaction, involving a number of different social groupings. For the purposes of taxonomic classification, as illustrated in Figure 1, four basic groupings have been identified — the students, the staff, including ancillary staff, parents and members of the wider community (outsiders). The latter group includes past students of the school. Included in Figure 1 is the school as a physical entity. The offences listed are those that occurred during the course of the research.

It must be stated that not only does the school provide a situational context in which individuals can meet and be with others, but also that relationships formed within the school can extend beyond the school setting. Similarly, relationships formed outside the school can extend into the school setting. These relationships can serve to obfuscate any link between the school and delinquent behaviour.



Offences:

(a) Burglary; theft; arson; trespass; vandalism; hoax calls
(b) Theft; vandalism
(c) Physical assault; theft; hoax calls; vandalism; sexual offences; receiving; corruption of a minor; violation of pornography laws; procuring; murder; carnal knowledge
(d) Burglary; theft; arson; trespass; vandalism; hoax calls
(e) Theft; vandalism; trespass
(f) Receiving; drug offences; sexual offences
(g) Physical assault
(h) Physical assault
(i) Child abuse; collusion in truancy
(j) Physical assault; theft; vandalism; extortion; self-abuse (glue, drugs, alcohol); weapons offences; sexual offences; violation of pornography laws; truancy; receiving.

Figure 1:1 Taxonomy of School-Related Offences: Crime and Delinquency

Offfences of the types (a), (b), (d) and (e) are those offences committed against the school as an institution. Ranging from arson to hoax telephone calls, such offences can be committed by members of any one of the four groupings.

Offfences type (c) are those committed by students against or in conjunction with members of the school staff, or by staff members against, or in conjunction with, students. Offences range from murder to hoax telephone calls.

Offfences type (f) and (i) are those committed against, or in conjunction with, students by either parents or outsiders. Offences range from child abuse to collusion in truancy; from receiving to the supply of drugs, alcohol or glue.

Offences type (g) and (h) are those committed by parents or outsiders against members of the school staff, with only offences of physical assault having been recorded.

Offences type (j) are those offences committed by students against each other. Offences range from theft to receiving; from extortion to truancy; and include the victimless crimes of drug, alcohol or glue abuse.

Offences of types (a) and (j) comprise the majority of criminal acts in the school setting. In other words, students are perceived as being the offenders in the school situation. However, offences of types (c) and (i) indicate that students not only offend, but also are offended against. Similarly, both the school as a physical entity and the school staff are offended against, on occasion, by parents or outsiders.

It is more appropriate to envisage "school-related" crime, rather than "school" crime itself. This term, however, tends to obscure the complexity of the situation. As Hood and Sparks (1970:64) state:

> An act of violence against an unknown stranger would usually be classified as delinquent, a fight between two boys at school as 'troublesome'. In the same way, taking things from home without permission will rarely be classified as theft (although legally, of course, it is); taking things from a store is something different . . .

What becomes critical in this situation is the way in which a particular act is perceived; upon whether or not the act is perceived as being 'accidental', 'stupid', 'deviant' or 'delinquent'. The labelling of the act will be determined by the interplay of a number of factors. Thus, just as the school can be regarded as a context within which, or against which delinquent acts occur, so it must be appreciated that the school also represents an institution integrally involved in the processes leading to the definition of delinquent acts (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963a; 1968; Polk and Schafter, 1972; Knight, 1975).

PROCESSES OF DEFINITION

In considering attempts to reach clear-cut definitions as to what constitutes crime or delinquency in any society, Tappan (1949:3) suggests that "certainly there is no more central question . . . and probably no more difficult to answer". Purely legalistic definitions have been offered. Rubin (1966:26) states unequivocally that "delinquency is what the law says it is". It is clearly not sufficient, however, to define delinquency in terms of being any act that violates a society's laws, for at one level it is difficult to imagine any young person who could not be said to have violated some part of the law, at some time. By utilising a purely legal definition, most if not all juveniles are also juvenile delinquents. At another level, such usage represents a totally unrealistic construction of the social world in that it ignores the proposition that the assessment of delinquent acts and of juvenile delinquents is an interactive social process and not merely a legal process. It is the assessment of an act as delinquent and not the act alone that makes the act delinquent (Hartjen, 1974).

In his discussion of the interpretive actions of the 'actor' and of significant 'others', Blumer (1969) suggests that the actor may assess his or her own behaviour. By doing so, the actor can be both actor and other, simultaneously. Thus, if an actor characterises his or her own behaviour as being delinquent, even though nobody else is present, the act can be considered delinquent. From this socio-legal perspective, juvenile delinquency can be viewed as the characterisation of an act which violates a society's laws.

This indicates that the assessment of an act as being delinquent can be vague, almost discretionary, particularly

when consideration is given to questions such as the intention of the actor involved. For example, in the school situation, a student may 'find' an object and retain that object without informing others, but do so without intention to deceive. Similarly, a student may pick up a piece of chalk with the intention of taking that piece of chalk home. The act can only be perceived as being delinquent if the act is characterised by the individual as actor, or by significant others, as delinquent — a conclusion which may be reached only under certain specific, or special conditions, such as an acute shortage of chalk, the existence of a common-sense consensus as to the high value of chalk, or the prevalence of chalk loss in the school at that point in time. Knowledge of the actor involved may become critical, as may the situation, however, the danger lies in creating delinquency where socially no delinquency has occurred, through the common-sense notion that delinquency is some objective action that takes place in the world.

Objections to definitions of crime based upon legalistic criteria are open to attack on ideological, as well as methodological grounds. Further, legalistic definitions assume a degree of societal consensus concerning what is or what is not illegal, which may not exist. In spite of these criticisms, such definitions represent a construct clearly understood by ordinary people and policy-makers alike (Braithwaite, 1977).

As can be seen, critical to any definition of an act as delinquent is the course of action taken with reference to the act. All too frequently, classroom teachers employ external means to solve problems, particularly if the problems are of a behavioural nature. The school may be able to deal with the problem effectively at the deputy-principal, principal, senior-mistress, or guidance officer level, but if seriousness dictates then the student may be passed from the interal coping system of the school to various external agencies which deal with children defined as being at risk, or in trouble, or who are otherwise defined as being in need of special attention (Polk and Schafer, 1972).

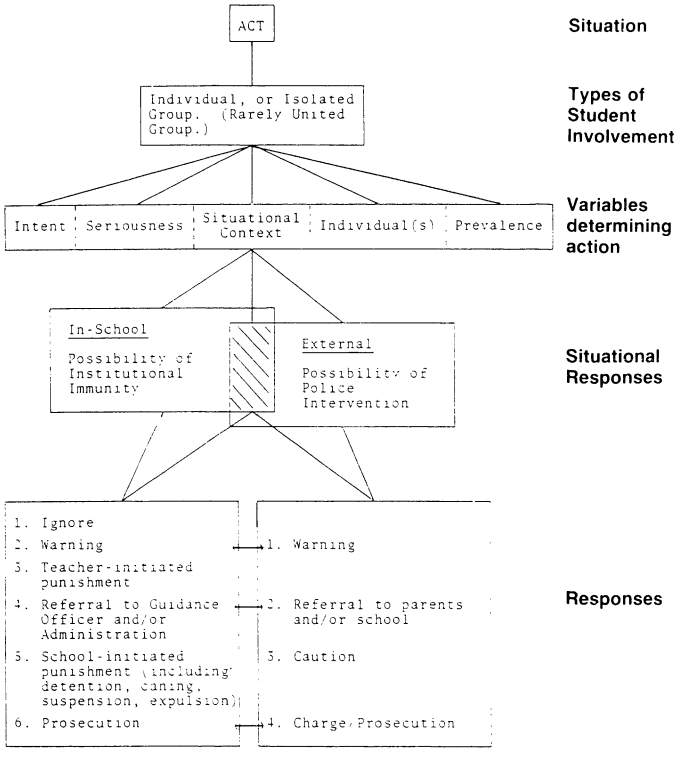


Figure 1:2 Differentiation of School Offences and Possible Responses in the Queensland Context

The tendency can become to move the reponsibility for such students from the school towards other external agencies at the earliest possible moment, or to move into a situation described by Phillipson (1971b:295), in which ". . . the rarity of contact between the school and social welfare organizations and their frequent mutual antagonisms seem to reflect misunderstandings and prejudices of both sides about the other's role".

Phillipson (op.cit.) also outlines the concept of institutional immunity, indicating the difficulties confronting any school that adopts such a response, or indeed the difficulties that may result from a more 'open-door' policy, as far as police intervention is concerned. The school policy will dictate the choice of strategy. The choice of strategy may well determine the courses of action available to school personnel and range from ignoring the act altogether, to suspension or expulsion, to handing the matter to the appropriate authorities for further action. The courses of action open to external agencies such as the Police, are more restricted.

Figure 2 outlines the determining variables, the possible responses and the courses of action available in the Queensland context.

There exists, therefore, a delicate balance n the determination of acts as deviant, or more specifically, as delinquent. The balance appears to hinge partly upon the mechanisms in operation within the school, including the resolution of variables determining appropriate action, and partly upon the mechanisms in operation in the wider community. There is evident a complex interplay of social, legal and moral obligations and responsibilities, based on consensus of values, attitudes and beliefs. However, the suggestion is strong that the consensus reached at the micro-level, i.e. within the school, may differ from, or ever be at variance with, the consensus at the macro-level, i.e. within the wider community.

Above all, it is important to appreciate that the schoo, as an institution represents, among other things, a power structure which reflects the existing power hierarchies within society. The power of labelling within a school is vested in the hands of the authority figures — the teachers — accepting tha within the student culture, peer-pressure can have an important role to play. This becomes crucial in any consideration of the relationship between schools, alienation and the development of delinquency.

ALIENATION AND SCHOOLING

The development of a reproduction or radical paradigm of schooling (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Willis, 1977; Apple, 1979; and others) has served to focus attention on the role of schools in reproducing and legitimating social inequalities. By doing so, such theorists reject liberal notions of schooling promoting the meriocratic hypothesis that schooling provides opportunities for social mobility. The reproduction hypothesis views schooing as central to the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production and, as such, serves to reinforce class-related values and attitudes. The process of schooling sows the seeds of alienation at a tender age. As Robinson (1977:159) indicates:

> Man is taught to accept the fact of his alienation as a child and loses control over himself as a man.

A sentiment echoed in a statement by Holt (1972:186):

> Schools and schooling, by their very nature, purposes, structures and ways of working are, and are meant to be, an obstacle to poor kids, designed and built not to move them up in the world but to keep them at the bottom of it and to make them think that it is their own fault.

Central to reproduction theories of education is the notion of the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968; Bowles and Gintis,

1976; Dale, 1977; Willis, 1977 and others) the unintended messages or hidden agenda of the process of schooling. At the heart of the concept of the hidden curriculum is the authority structure of schooling specifically, the hierarchical nature of schooling and the lessons of hierarchy and subordinacy that that entails. Employers, for example, look for high school graduates who will turn up consistently, submit to orders and not cause trouble (Carnoy, 1972).

This brings sharply into focus the relationship between schools and the world of work. Schools are peculiarly dependent upon images of the future as motivational devices. Rewards offered to students for adherence to school values are purely symbolic. Thus, schools cannot promise much when society cannot promise much.

At times of high youth unemployment the adage that 'hard work will produce success' becomes patently false. Empirically, the evidence in Australia at this time indicates high levels of unemployment, particularly among 15 to 19 year olds. Furthermore, the evidence clearly indicates that there are not enough jobs for those seeking work. Alienation results from the perceived disjuncture between the fruits of schooling and the realities of unemployment. Moreover, school to work transition programmes mask the difficulties confronting school-leavers. Such programmes do not create jobs. Regardless of the skills provided, school-leavers are still unable to obtain employment.

The process of alienation created by school-to-work disjuncture can be related to specific aspects of schooling such as irrelevant curriculum — irrelevant, that is, to the needs of the majority of students — and in broader terms, to the conflicting aims of schooling as held by students, on the one hand, and school authorities, on the other hand. Schools are success-oriented. The competitive academic curriculum, geared to a minority of students, precludes the majority of students from success in school terms. Experiences of success, but more important, of failure, pervade student life. This is vitally important because the notion of success in school (academic) terms is future as well as present-oriented. The school functions to control access to future occupational careers and social positions. For those students locked into the successful pathways of schooling, the school is an environment that continually provides a range of rewards for success. This in turn provides a rationale for continuing to maintain that success. Moreover, success in schools carries immediate rewards which reinforce compliant behaviour (Pearl, 1971). But what of the school failures?

Polk (1983) suggests that educational failures face two problems:

> One, the routines of the school are likely to convey a sense of stigma as an immediate result of the failure. Those who fail may be denied access to desirable school experiences and organizations, while at the same time being relegated to particular classes, teachers and routines which convey clearly to the failing student and to the other significant actors in the scene (other students, teachers, or parents) the lowered status of the 'failures'. Two, the very fact of the failure begins to remove the rationality for continued educational performance.

Structural aspects of schooling, such as streaming, promote the development of peer groupings oriented towards either success or failure. Networks of youth culture provide further sources of alienation. Pearl (1971) suggests that schools segregate students, insulating them from the adult world. From one perspective, therefore, the student role can be viewed as one of immediate worthlessness, and meaningless. Students, or children of school age, have little influence on events or situations.[1] Streaming in schools acts to further segregate students,, but the reactions of students to schooling varies according to the orientation of the particular stream. In the high school under study a rigid pattern of streaming from Grade 9 onwards segregates academic from non-academic classes.

Connell, et al. (1982), for example, recognises three forms of attachment to schooling — compliance, pragmatism and resistance. It is the latter which becomes of greatest interest in this context. Student resistance to schooling takes a variety of forms, including rebellion, dissociation or forms of delinquency. It would appear that students in schools are involved in various forms of resistance across age groupings and regardless of academic status. This can be viewed by reference to one example — the examination of forms of attendance and non-attendance among students.

Research into truancy has indicated the difficulties associated with determining actual levels of non-attendance among students (Turner, 1974; Brim, et al. 1978; Duke, et al. 1980). Research into absenteeism in the high school setting (Teachman, 1979; Petrie, 1982; 1983) is beginning to reveal that actual rates of absenteeism, or more specifically truancy, are not only hidden in terms of the extent of the phenomenon, but also vary in type and are not restricted to particular age, socio-economic or academic groupings of students.[2] In the high school under study, attendance rates appear superficially high. The annual average attendance rates for the school as a whole (1977-1979) ranged from 86% to 88.2%.[3] These figures, however, represent official rates of attendance, or non-attendance, as indicated by the official school registers.

Closer investigation of attendance rates, drawn from the perceptions of students and staff, as well as the official school registers, suggests a different picture, as illustrated in Table 1.

Student	Official Absences			Estd./ Actual No. of Days Attendance	No. of Days Offically Registered Present but Absent	No. of Days Legitimate Absence	No. of Days Truancy	Average No. of Lessons Missed (per week) When Marked Present in School
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 3*	Term 3	Term 3	Term 3	
Joseph	6	9	26	32	22	3	45	6
Keith	4	8	26	48	6	6	26	18
Noel	27	54	54	26	0	..	..	0
Julie	6	3	6	74	0	6	0	4
Michelle	4	12	12	54	14	5	21	6
Chris	10	4	24	36	24	8	40	18
Joanne	11	41	33	36	7	5	35	10
Tracey	9	7	1	79	0	1	0	0

TABLE 1: Case Studies: Attendance Records, 1978.
* There were 80 possible school days in Term 3, 1978.
** These columns cannot be included for Noel owing to lack of information concerning the extent of parental collusion.

The case studies illustrate a variety of points, not least being the apparent discrepancies in the official figures. What is more pertinent, however, in this context, are aspects of the individual histories involved in the development of a tradition of truancy among particular students. For example, five out of the seven students (Joseph, Keith, Noel, Chris and Joanne) have histories of truancy involvement in primary school. Joseph truants from high school in the company of a younger brother — who should be attending a local primary school. Noel officially defined as a school-phobic has a history of non-attendance traceable to Grade 1. There can be little doubt that the timetable structure of the high school offers increased opportunities for in-school truancy. Nevertheless, four out of the seven (Joseph, Keith, Chris and Joanne) indicated that they had 'opted out' of classes from as early as Grade 3 onwards.

In terms of absenteeism, however defined, there are at least four general trends discernible. First, that absenteeism, specifically truancy, is increasing. Second, that truancy occurs from the early school years onwards. Third, that the extent of parental collusion in truancy is increasing. Finally, that the

structure of schooling, in organisational terms, can facilitate truancy. This latter point can be related directly to the development of a low institutional pride syndrome within some schools.

In the high school under study, the synergistic effects of a pejorative reputation and specific ecological factors, create an environment which fosters disenchantment and low levels of expectation. A low institutional pride syndrome among staff as well as students develops. High rates of staff turnover, low levels of commitment by staff and the consequent breakdown in organisational procedures and routines facilitate and even promote the development of delinquent behaviour among students. Attempts, for example, to combat levels of student deviance by 'tightening up' disciplinary procedures actually create a cycle of deviance which increases the possibilities of deviance among students.[4] This in turn can serve to increase levels of student alienation. There is a double dilemma in this situation: the powerful influence of teachers on the classroom situation, teacher expectations, frequency of praise and encouragement, disciplinary styles and other related factors have led researchers to conclude that teachers rank foremost on the list of contributory factors to the development of student alienation. At the same time, by extension, teachers are perceived as key figures in attempts to reduce levels of alienation. By following particular courses of action teachers can reduce levels of, for example, delinquency or truancy.

Three points must be made. First, that hitherto little attention has been given to the existence, extent or possible causes of teacher alienation. Second, that implicit in the suggestion that teachers hold the powers to alter school situations is the assumption that teachers actually do possess the means or powers so to do. Third, that by focusing upon a particular group — in this case, teachers — as holding the key to the remedy of social ills such as delinquency, researchers run the risk of alienating that very group, thereby exacerbating problems.

CONCLUSION

Newmann (1981) suggests that extensive scholarship has shown that alienation is an inevitable and not totally undesirable aspect of the human condition. Reducing alienation, therefore, is not tantamount to eliminating stress or effort but more a rearrangement of conditions so that people expend energy in ways that enhance engagement with work, people and physical surroundings. It would appear to make sense to reduce levels of alienation in schools for two basic reasons. First, student involvement or engagement is necessary for learning. Second, it is socially and psychologically valuable for people to interact in an integrated, active way. Newmann suggests that strategies which promote individuality, communality and integration and raise levels of satisfaction will go some way toward reducing levels of alienation. Thus, the reduction of school size, the increase of voluntary choice, the development of clear and consistent goals, the maximisation of opportunities for students to contribute to school policy and school management and the extension of co-operative, mutually respecting relationships allied to meaningful, relevant curricula, all lend themselves to the reduction of levels of alienation. Certainly, Reynolds concluded that more 'successful' schools (i.e. those with lower rates of delinquency) were smaller in size, had lower rates of staff turnover, had smaller classes and curiously, had older buildings. In terms of organisation, more 'successful' schools were likely to have prefect systems, enforced regulations concerning school uniform less vigorously, enforced school rules less vigorously and in a less relentless, obsessive manner and used lower rates of corporal punishment:

Woods (1977) states that:

> Today children have more freedom and independence, more discussion and contact with their parents, more money and material things, more outings and holidays, more lenient discipline, and fewer rules to obey and duties to perform, all of which increase the social distance between total institutions and the rest of society . . . Schools have been developing rationalising tendencies and in a society which has not stood still, which, indeed, has been moving in the opposite direction.

Clearly these points are related. Authoritarian, coercive schools lacking student involvement create conflict between the school as an institution and the freer, more liberated adolescent of today's society. But this remains only part of the picture, for from one perspective, behaviour such as delinquent behaviour will continue to develop as long as schools continue to prepare students for the alienating world of work. Changes in, or to schools must be accompanied by wider social changes. The school plays a crucial role, in a number of different ways, in the development of delinquent behaviour. This role is usually contributory, but can be causal. The role, however, defined, cannot be ignored.

NOTES:

1. Turner (1969) suggests that alienation can be viewed as the main symbol of the new era, in the context of student unrest on campuses throughout the western, industrialised world. Alienation becomes an expression of outrage of the depersonalising and demoralising effects of modern institutions. It is in terms of alienation that the young are conscious of injustices. Lyne (1979) utilises this argument in an analysis of age stratification in which he contends that although the modern era has created a new, exploited social grouping — adolescents or youths — it is not age but economic power that continues to provide the key to an understanding of stratification within such societies.
2. Teachman, for example, distinguishes between in-school and out-of-school truancy. In-school truancy is non-attendance in classes in spite of actual presence at school.
3. Direct comparisons are difficult to obtain and dangerous in their application. Comparison with figures presented by Reynolds, et al. (1980) of attendance rates by year or by school for nine secondary schools in South Wales (1966-67 to 1972-73) would place the Queensland secondary school within the top two or three of the schools in terms of attendance rates. The average annual attendance rate for all nine schools, in the South Wales study, ranged from 80.7% to 84.1%.
4. Hargreaves, et al. (1975:260) differentiates between deviance-provocative and deviance-insulative teachers:

   > The first type of teacher finds that the deviant pupils behave in highly deviant ways in his classroom and his handling of them serves to exacerbate their deviance. The second type of teacher finds that the pupils present relatively few problems in his classroom and his handling of them seems to inhibit their deviance.

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